

Infobits

Christine Winter

Around the aisles

Other goodies that showed up at the winter CES, the largest show in 26 years of such exhibitions, included a new innovation in video game cartridges. The new 2-in-1 cartridge, which can be flipped over to provide a second complete and separate game, could save video game freaks a lot of money if it ever catches on, especially since these first double games sell for the same price as each sold individually before.

One drawback — this new piece of technology comes from PlayAround, the company that specializes in super raunchy X-rated adult video games with titles such as *Burning Desire* and *Knight on the Town*. (PlayAround is distributed by Game Source, Canoga Park, Ca.) You may remember them from the scandal ensuing after they introduced *Custer's Revenge*, the first game with rape as its goal, for the Atari system. It's hard to say whether feminists or Atari howled louder. *Custer's Revenge* no longer is on the market.

From E.R.S. (Electronic Readout Systems Inc., Tampa) comes a ruler with a built-in calculator that will sell for \$19.95. Magnavox has decided to "systemize" some of its individual audio and video components, and has put a 9-inch color TV and a boom box audio system with detachable speakers into vertical and horizontal cabinets. The horizontal cabinet provides a large slideout storage area for audio tapes, and in the vertical cabinet, the tiny speakers are tucked into larger, more esthetically pleasing speaker boxes, which also provide cassette storage. All the pieces can be easily removed and returned to their portable status. The point of it all is that the complete "system" simply looks nicer in a small apartment, kid's room, or dorm room than a tiny TV and a boom box sitting on a table. Each will retail for about \$650.

How much smaller can the personal portable AM-FM radios get? Ask Panasonic, which has just introduced its RF series, with units slightly smaller than a pack of cigarettes. They come with collapsible earphones and cost from \$70 to \$90.

A hi-fi with dynamic range

There've been some attempts at churning out stereo VCRs, but nothing that really excited the industry — until Sony introduced its Beta hi-fi at the recent winter Consum-

er Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Sony claims its Beta hi-fi has a dynamic range (the ratio of the softest to the loudest sounds an audio medium can handle) of 80 dB, which makes it superior to conventional VCRs, VCRs with Dolby, FM broadcasts, LP records, audio cassettes and even open reel tapes. Only the new digital audio systems, which aren't available yet on the consumer market in this country, offer a wider dynamic range. All you have to do is plug your new Beta hi-fi into your old hi-fi equipment to get true stereo sound. (Of course, you have to have a fairly decent audio system to reap the full benefits.)

Beta hi-fi is a new format in a field in which there already are two formats fighting it out, but all Beta hi-fi tapes will be compatible with all existing Beta equipment, and vice versa. No price has been set, though the hi-fi systems definitely will be more costly than standard Beta VCRs. They are expected to debut by mid-'83.

While we're on the subject of Sony, the originators of the VCR have introduced a one-piece color video cassette recorder and camera. The *Betamovie*, as it is called, is designed for novice home movie buffs, rather than videophiles. It uses the same cassette as the standard Beta VCR, and records for three hours and 20 minutes.

All you have to do is pop a standard cassette into the *Betamovie*, shoot your film, and then pop it into the *Betamax* already attached to your TV. It doesn't make your current equipment obsolete, as the proposed 8 mm. video equipment, with quarter-inch tape, would do. No price has been set, and it should be available by September.

Ghostly games

Picture this scenario. It is a dark and stormy night, and a chess board sits in front of a roaring fire in an old Victorian mansion. There is no one in sight, but suddenly one of the chess characters slides slowly across the board. After a few moments, the opposing color makes its move. A haunted house? The ghosts of two ancient chess masters still battling it out from the beyond?

Not exactly, unless you're willing to attribute occult powers to the mighty microprocessor. Milton Bradley Co. has come out with the ultimate in computer chess games, the electronic *Grand Master*, a computer that moves its own pieces. Once you make a move and press your piece down onto the touch-sensitive playing field, it registers in the computer's brain, and soon an opposing piece glides from its square to another. The GM also can be set to play itself, which is an even more eerie sight. Prices will range from \$499 to \$599 when the GM debuts this summer.